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In his review of "In the Time of the Tyrants" James Polk quotes the authors as describing the United States' expansion of the Cold War to Latin America as "stupid" and as saying "so were those who made" this policy. Polk adds, "thus indicting all American presidents since Eisnehower."

In this Polk makes two errors. He should have said beginning with Eisnehower and he should have recognized the changes in JFK's policies beginning with the end of the Cuba missile crisis.

Whether one evaluates JFK's "Alliance for Progress" as a gesture or as a meaningful effort to change our Latin America policies, it is a fact that shortly before he was assassinated, when the U.S.-supported Dominican military overthrew its first democratically elected government, Kennedy stated a new U.S. policy, not to recognize military dictatorships that overthrew democratically-elected governments.

Polk errs also in not noting that there have been exceptions to the authors' condemnations of all the Latin american military as "at best drones, at worst cancers." My friend, General Guillermo Murdoch, when he was Uruguayan military attache in Washington, later its chief of staff, was an authentic and practising democrat. Pinochet had to have Chile's chief of staff, General Rene Schneider, assassinated before he could fix his cold-war, totalitarian dictatorship on that country.

During World War II it was part of the Paraguayan army that revolted against the dictatorship of Hector Morinigo, which was interited by Stroessner. and in Brazil it was Lieutenant Luis Carlos Prestes who led part of the Brazilian army and many of its people in a revolt against the dictatorship of Getullio Vargas.

There are other exceptions to the general truth about the Latin American military which, to a large degree, was the United States' creature.

Harold Weisberg